

## Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation

# If at First You Don't Succeed, You're Probably Human

### DEVOTIONAL READING: Colossians 2:1-7

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 4:18-20; 16:15-18; Luke 2:40, 52;  
John 1:40-42; 21:15-19; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:6, 9-11; 3:12-16;  
Colossians 1:9-11; Hebrews 6:1-3; 2 Peter 3:14-18

PRINT PASSAGES: Matthew 4:18-20; 16:16-18; John 21:15-18; 2 Peter 3:14-15, 18

## Key Verse

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17, KJV)

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The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17, NIV)

## Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Examine the confidence Jesus continued to express in Peter despite his shortcomings and failures.
- Receive the love and encouragement that Jesus offers in our growing faith.
- Offer patience and encouragement to young disciples who desire to grow in faith.

## \*Key Terms

Blessed (Matthew 16:17)—Greek: *makarios* (mak-ar'-ee-os): happy; fortunate; favored by God.

Casting (Matthew 4:18)—Greek: *balló* (bal'-lo): throwing; putting; placing; thrusting; sending.

Followed (Matthew 4:20)—Greek: *akoloutheó* (ak-ol-oo-theh'-o): accompanied as a disciple.

Girdest (John 21:18)—Greek: *zónnumi* (dzone'-noo-mi): fastened with a belt; get “dressed” (NIV).

Longsuffering (2 Peter 3:15)—Greek: *makrothumia* (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah): forbearance; fortitude; slowness in avenging wrongs; “patience” (NIV).

Rock (Matthew 16:18)—Greek: *petra* (pet'-ra)—large stone; metaphorically, a man like a rock, by reason of his firmness and strength of soul.

*\*Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2*



## Overview

Jesus never sends anyone on an assignment alone. When He calls a person to a task, He promises to remain present and provide guidance every step of the way. Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV) declares, “The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” This truth reassures believers that although the journey of faith may include rough terrain, God will not abandon those who follow Him. The responsibility of every believer is to keep eyes fixed on Him.

God does not promise an easy path, but He guarantees His faithful guidance. Like an experienced hiking guide, He knows the terrain ahead and prepares His followers for challenges they cannot yet see. As builders of God’s kingdom, believers should live in a way that reflects Christ so clearly that others are drawn to Him and desire to become part of His family. Mistakes will happen—humanity carries the consequences of Adam’s sin—but the mission remains the same: follow Christ, trust Him, and remain faithful, regardless of how sharp the turn or steep the climb.

In today’s lesson, Jesus calls four fishermen to follow Him, questions Peter about his love, and later shows Peter urging believers to live peacefully and faithfully as they await Christ’s return.

## Life Happens

For a while, Thursday nights were solid. A group of friends from high school had committed to studying God’s Word together, encouraging one another in faith, and growing closer to Christ. It was honest, supportive, and full of inside jokes . . . until the group chat went silent. One evening, one of the members, Jordan, spoke carelessly in a moment of anger. His words were harsh and hurtful, contradicting the very principles they had been studying together. When his comments spread beyond the group, the damage was immediate. Trust was broken, feelings were hurt, and the fellowship they had built began to crumble.

For weeks, messages on the group chat were awkward, followed by deafening silence. Some members withdrew, unsure how to respond. Others responded with harsh words of their own. It seemed their Bible study might be over before it had truly begun. A few weeks later, Tasha sent a message asking if the group could meet—not to rehash the drama, but to talk about how they were handling it as a group. That night, they were honest about the disappointment and the tension that had built up. But they also remembered why they started the study in the first place. It was never about being perfect. It was about growing in faith together. Others admitted that they hadn’t handled it well, either—and slowly, they started to rebuild trust.

Spiritual growth isn’t a straight path. People stumble, and sometimes they disappoint you. But community means sticking around long enough to work through the hard stuff.

## Questions

1. Tell about a time when someone in your faith community disappointed you deeply. What happened to the relationship?
2. Where are you currently struggling to balance grace and boundaries (with a person, group, or situation)?
3. Think of someone who has hurt or disappointed your community. What would “sticking around long enough to work through the hard stuff” require from you?

## COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Job Description Change (*Matthew 4:18-20*)

#### KJV

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.  
19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.  
20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

#### NIV

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.  
19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”  
20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

Following Jesus means letting go of the old way of living and stepping into a new path of faith and obedience. In verse 18, Jesus walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and spotted two fishermen—Simon and Andrew—hard at work. He called out, telling them to follow Him. But He was not just inviting them to walk with Him . . . He was inviting them to change the focus of their entire lives. Instead of catching fish, He told them that they would now fish for people (verse 19). Everyone has a God-given purpose, and life often serves as a training ground for that purpose. God uses natural skills, talents, and even careers to carry out His bigger plan. Simon and Andrew ran a thriving fishing business, working in the waters of the Sea of Galilee day after day. Yet, Jesus redirected their dedication, discipline, and perseverance toward something eternal—gathering people into God’s kingdom.

Just as the Sea of Galilee overflowed with fish, the world is full of people who need the hope of the Gospel. Jesus called Simon and Andrew to share that message, and they responded immediately, dropping their nets and following Him without hesitation (verse 20). That same call still goes out today. Jesus invites every believer to follow Him, allow His truth to transform them, and lead others into the light of His love.

 **What Do You Think?** How would you describe the difference between just believing in Jesus and actually following Him? Can you share an example that shows the difference?

### Jesus Is the Living Victorious Messiah (*Matthew 16:16-18*)

#### KJV

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.  
17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.  
18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

## NIV

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

18 “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

One of Jesus' most powerful teaching tools was the use of questions. He did not ask because He lacked knowledge, but to spark thought, encourage reflection, and draw out faith. In one moment with His disciples, Jesus asked, “*Who do you say I am?*” He already knew Peter's heart, but the question pushed Peter to examine his faith and understanding. By this point, Peter and the other disciples had seen Jesus calm a violent storm, raise a widow's son from the dead, and feed five thousand people with only two fish and five loaves of bread. These miracles made it clear that Jesus was more than a prophet—they revealed Him as God in human form.

When Peter boldly answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” Jesus affirmed that this insight came not from human reasoning but through divine revelation (verses 16-17). God had opened Peter's spiritual eyes, and his confession became a clear declaration of faith. By calling God “the living God,” Peter separated Him from lifeless idols and false gods. Jesus then called Simon by the name “Peter,” meaning “rock” (verse 18), and declared that He would build His church on this rock. He promised that “the gates of hell”—the power of death—would not defeat it. This statement confirmed that even death cannot destroy the church, because Jesus has already conquered death. The foundation of the church stands secure in the unshakable truth that Jesus is the living, victorious Messiah.

 **What Do You Think?** Has something ever happened in your life that felt too perfectly timed to be a coincidence? Could it have been God at work? Why or why not?

## Showing Love through Words and Deeds

*(John 21:15-18; 2 Peter 3:14-15, 18)*

## KJV

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

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14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

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18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

## NIV

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

18 “Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

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14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

15 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

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18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

This conversation between Jesus and Peter occurred after Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus then asked Peter three times, “Do you love Me?” This question likely stirred guilt and sorrow in Peter’s heart. Although Jesus had already forgiven him, Peter may have struggled to forgive himself. Many believers face the same battle, projecting their limited capacity to forgive onto God and forgetting that His forgiveness is perfect and complete. Jesus did not simply ask Peter if he loved Him—He followed each question with a command: “Feed My sheep.” This call was more than an invitation to affirm love through words; it required action. Genuine love for God is active—it shows in caring for others, sharing the Gospel, and living in self-denial for the sake of God’s kingdom.

Peter declared his love, and Jesus restored him to a renewed purpose. In John 21, Jesus revealed that Peter’s future would involve suffering for the sake of the Gospel. That path may have sounded daunting, but Peter, now restored, understood that obedience to Christ outweighed the cost. Believers today may not know what the future holds, but they know the One who holds it. Faithfulness means persevering in doing good without growing weary. Love for Jesus must extend beyond words, showing itself in consistent service, sacrifice, and obedience.

## What Do You Think? Loving God involves both words and actions. What does loving God in both word and deed look like in everyday life?

### Your Life

Peter declared his love for Jesus but still denied Him three times. Modern denial may occur in subtle ways—such as receiving blessings without thanking God or claiming success as a personal achievement. Withholding gratitude quietly communicates denial. Loving God in both word and deed means consistently recognizing His hand in every good thing. Giving Him credit builds humility, strengthens faith, and shows others the link between belief and action.

### Your World!

Culture often connects worth to performance, leaving failure marked by shame. God offers something better—complete forgiveness to anyone who repents. His focus is not on the past, but on the believer's choice to return to Him. Believers who embrace this truth can extend grace, offering an example of mercy in a world quick to judge. Showing compassion reflects God's heart and points people toward having hope in Him.

### Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive the times when we ignored opportunities to speak about You. Place a deeper commitment in our hearts to be faithful stewards of Your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 26	"A Community of Testimony and Praise"	(Psalm 22:22-28)
TUESDAY, January 27	"A Community of Hope-filled Heirs"	(Ephesians 1:15-23)
WEDNESDAY, January 28	"A Community with Divine Authority"	(Matthew 16:13-20)
THURSDAY, January 29	"A Community Made Strong Together"	(Ecclesiastes 4:7-12)
FRIDAY, January 30	"A Community United in Worship"	(Psalm 150)
SATURDAY, January 31	"A Community Silently Growing"	(Mark 4:26-32)
SUNDAY, February 1	"A Community of Oneness"	(Ephesians 4:4-16)

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